

# Globe West

THE BOSTON GLOBE THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 28, 2013 | BOSTONGLOBE.COM/WEST

NANCY SHOHE T WEST

ARTS

## Portraits trace legacy of family's next generation

After relocating for 19 months to Portland, Ore., to help her daughter with a new baby, Francesca Anderson was ready to return home. She missed her everyday life — but most of all, she missed the Lexington art gallery that bears her name.

"It's like my second child," she said recently.

And Anderson is celebrating her own homecoming with a very special show: "Portraits of the Smith Grandchildren," featuring the 10 grandchildren of Lexington residents Bill and Polly Smith.

As Anderson sees it, the Smiths have given their children an unusual and generous gift. As each grandchild reached the age of 5 or so, the senior Smiths commissioned a painter, all but one chosen by the child's parents, to create a portrait of the youngster.

The results, Anderson said, are a fascinating study in portraiture styles, since each set of parents was attracted to a different artist from among the many whose work Anderson showed them as they tried to make a decision.

"Back in 2001, Polly Smith came to me and said she and her husband were interested in having their grandchildren's portraits painted," Anderson recalled. "So I talked to them about the considerations. The first, of course, is price range. Next, what size did they have in mind? They weren't sure, so they came to my annual spring portrait show to get more ideas. They decided to go with half-length portraits," measuring 34 by 20 inches.

For the eldest grandchild, Polly Smith chose artist Robina MacIntyre. But when the next grandchild reached the age of 5, MacIntyre had moved to England. Smith brought her daughter into the gallery and asked her to choose; she was attracted to the work of a New York-based artist, Lois Woolley. As it turned out, each of the Smiths' four children chose a different artist for their family's portraits.

"The first artist, Robina MacIntyre, is not really a Realist nor an Impressionist, but falls somewhere in between," said Anderson. "The second daughter wanted a softer look, so she chose Lois Woolley, who is more of an Impressionist portrait painter, to paint her three children."

The Smith's third child is a son; his wife got to make the choice for her family, and since she favors a more realistic style, she chose John Ennis. The youngest daughter chose Sergei Chernikov of Wisconsin.

"There's no right and wrong about the choice," said Anderson. "It's a personal choice based on what someone identifies with emotionally, what makes them feel good when they look at a painting."

The portraits were painted over the course of nearly a decade, from 2003 to last year. There are eight works in all, since one set of parents chose to have their three sons painted together.

"It's so interesting to note the likenesses among the 10 cousins; they are clearly all from the same family. But it's even more interesting because each mother chose a different artist, which makes the exhibit much more diverse than if one artist had painted all 10 children."

To Anderson, the Smith family exhibition — which, because it is small, is being displayed in her gallery with a group show, called "Snow Scenes" — is a tribute not only to these growing children, but also to the vision and artistic commitment of the grandparents.

"Parents are rightfully caught up in the day-to-day lives of their child or children, taking them to school, doctors, games, lessons, thinking about summer camps and vacations," Anderson said.

"Grandparents may be more likely to think of something like a portrait. They sometimes have the money to do this, but also the foresight to capture their grandchild in a beautiful work of art."

"Portraits of the Smith Grandchildren" can be seen through March 9 at Francesca Anderson Fine Art, 56 Adams St. in Lexington. For more information, call 781-862-0660 or go to [www.fafineart.com](http://www.fafineart.com).



FRANCESCA ANDERSON

Brynn, one of the subjects featured in "Portraits of the Smith Grandchildren," visits her painting by Lois Woolley on display at Francesca Anderson Fine Art in Lexington.